

In 2014, the government of Barbados continued making efforts to address violent crime. In the first four months of the year, the country recorded a 24 percent decrease in most categories of criminal activity.

Impacted by the global recession, a sluggish economy, and serious crime, the tourism industry continued to see declines in arrivals and revenue. Central government debt rose to 96 percent of GDP in October 2014. The island nation currently uses more than 15 percent of government revenues to service its debt.

Political Rights and Civil Liberties:

Political Rights: 40 / 40 [Key]

A. Electoral Process: 12 / 12

Members of the 30-member House of Assembly, the lower house of the bicameral Parliament, are directly elected for five-year terms. The governor general, who represents the British monarch as head of state, appoints the 21 members of the Senate: 12 on the advice of the prime minister, 2 on the advice of the leader of the opposition, and the remaining 7 at his own discretion. The prime minister is appointed by the governor general and is usually the leader of the political party with a majority in the House of Assembly.

Legislative elections were held in February 2013. In a narrow win, the ruling Democratic Labour Party (DLP) won 16 of 30 seats in the House of Assembly. The Barbados Labour Party (BLP), under former prime minister Owen Arthur, took the remaining 14 seats.

B. Political Pluralism and Participation: 16 / 16

Political parties are free to organize. Historically, power has alternated between two centrist parties, the DLP and the BLP. Other political organizations without representation in Parliament include the People's Empowerment Party, a group favoring trade union rights and greater state intervention in the economy.

C. Functioning of Government: 12 / 12

Barbados is largely free from governmental corruption. The country was ranked 17 out of 175 countries and territories surveyed in Transparency International's 2014 Corruption Perceptions Index.

Civil Liberties: 59 / 60

D. Freedom of Expression and Belief: 16 / 16

Freedom of expression is respected. Public opinion expressed through the news media, which are free from censorship and government control, has a significant influence on policy. Newspapers, including the

two major dailies, are privately owned. Four private and two government-run radio stations operate in the country. The single broadcast television station, operated by the government-owned Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, presents a wide range of political viewpoints. The government has so far failed to fulfill its promise to introduce new legislation on the freedom of information. Access to the internet is not restricted.

The constitution guarantees freedom of religion, which is widely respected for mainstream religious groups. However, members of Barbados's small Rastafarian community have reported discrimination in education and employment. Academic freedom is fully respected.

E. Associational and Organizational Rights: 12 / 12

Barbados's legal framework provides important guarantees for the freedom of assembly, which are upheld in practice. The right to form civic organizations and labor unions is respected. Two major labor unions, as well as various smaller ones, are active.

F. Rule of Law: 16 / 16

The judicial system is independent, and the Supreme Court includes a high court and a court of appeals. Barbados has ratified the Caribbean Court of Justice as its highest appellate court. There are occasional reports and complaints of the use of excessive force by the Royal Barbados Police Force to extract confessions, along with reports that police do not always seek warrants before searching homes. In March 2014, reports emerged of two robbery suspects who were allegedly tortured by police and coerced to sign confessions.

Barbados has been successful in combatting violent crime in recent years. Nevertheless, violence related to drug trafficking continues to pose a serious challenge to authorities, as the island is a transshipment point for illegal narcotics originating from Venezuela.

The government has taken some positive steps to address overcrowding in the prison system and to discipline prison personnel accused of abusing inmates, though there has not been substantial progress in prosecuting such cases. The death penalty remains mandatory for certain capital crimes but has not been implemented since 1984. In 2014, the government announced plans to seek the removal of the mandatory death penalty as a penalty for those convicted of murder. In 2011, the government declared its intentions to update the Corporal Punishment Act, the Juvenile Offenders Act, and the Prevention of Cruelty Act, in response to rulings by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights that found Barbados in violation of the American Convention on Human Rights. However, no notable steps had been taken by the end of 2014.

Barbados has been criticized for excessively restrictive migration policies, including in the treatment of foreign nationals at airports. In several separate cases, visitors from Jamaica have reported sexual abuse by Barbadian immigration officers. In October 2013, the Caribbean Court of Justice ruled in favor of Jamaican Shanique Myrie, deciding that Barbados had violated her rights of entry as stipulated in the Treaty of Chaguaramas, granting 77,000 Barbadian dollars (US\$39,000) in damages. Myrie had been subjected to a body cavity search upon arrival in Barbados and then deported.

Same-sex sexual activity is punishable by a life sentence in prison, although the relevant legislation has rarely been enforced in recent years. There are no legal protections against discrimination based on sexual

orientation.

G. Personal Autonomy and Individual Rights: 15 / 16

Women comprise roughly half of the country's workforce, although the World Economic Forum reported that women earned 25 percent less than men in 2014 for comparable work. Women are underrepresented in the political sphere, comprising only 17 percent of the House of Assembly. Violence against women remains widespread despite domestic violence laws, and police responsiveness is often slow and inadequate. Barbados is in Tier 2 of the U.S. State Department's 2014 *Trafficking in Persons Report*, as the island nation does not fully comply with minimum standards for the elimination of human trafficking—a claim that the Barbadian government has disputed.

Sexual abuse of children in Barbados is on the rise, with as many as 256 cases reported in 2014, an increase from 165 cases in 2011 and 225 cases in 2010.

Scoring Key: X / Y (Z)

X = Score Received

Y = Best Possible Score

Z = Change from Previous Year

[Full Methodology](#)